AI Writes. Humans Hallucinate.

We worry about machines producing text. But the deeper problem may lie in the way humans repeat themselves, project their own assumptions, and lose themselves in the debate over AI.

This essay is less about artificial intelligence than about what it reveals about responsibility, judgment, and human thought.

1. An Old Question, Seen in a New Light

Some time ago, I published an essay entitled **“Is AI an Author, an Editor, or a Mirror?”**

In it, I raised a question that seemed to me far more important than the one that keeps resurfacing: **“Was this text written by a human or by a machine?”**

To my mind, the real question lies elsewhere. Not simply **who writes**, but **who truly stands behind the ideas expressed in a text.**

I also argued that this question did not begin with artificial intelligence.

Writing has long raised questions about authorship, revision, editing, influence, and even style as a supposed proof of intelligence.

AI therefore does not introduce an entirely new problem. It merely brings into sharper focus an older confusion: **the difference between producing a text and producing a thought.**

An AI can rephrase, structure, correct, suggest, and sometimes even challenge an idea. But it cannot answer for it. It cannot explain it as a lived experience, nor assume it as an intellectual position.

That responsibility still belongs to the author.

2. When the Debate Goes in Circles

Since then, I have read countless essays about AI. I understand why the subject fascinates as much as it unsettles. It touches on writing, creativity, work, intelligence, and ultimately our place as human beings.

But the more I read, the more another problem became apparent.

It is not only AI that repeats itself.

So do we when we talk about AI.

The same questions keep returning:

> Will AI replace writers?
>
> Can we still distinguish a human-written text from an AI-generated one?
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> Should we disclose when we use ChatGPT?
>
> Is an AI-assisted text still authentic?

These are legitimate questions. Yet they are too often asked as though no one had ever raised them before.
The problem is not that we talk too much about AI.
The difficulty begins when the conversation becomes intellectually impoverished, repeating the same familiar oppositions:

> human versus machine;
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> authenticity versus assistance;
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> creativity versus automation.

3. Responsibility Cannot Be Delegated

At times, it feels as though we are still hearing echoes of an imagination shaped by decades of science fiction. Ever since *Terminator,* the idea of an intelligent machine escaping its creator has become a familiar figure in our collective imagination. Cinema alone is not responsible for today's anxieties, of course, but it has helped establish artificial intelligence as a potential threat long before it became part of everyday life.

If artificial intelligence should concern us, it is perhaps not first because it can produce text, reformulate ideas, or imitate certain forms of human creativity. The gravest issues already lie elsewhere: **in military and security applications, where AI systems assist in analysing information, identifying targets, and accelerating decision-making.**

Do you remember when computers first entered the workplace? People would often say, ***"It's a computer error."*** Yet a computer does nothing more than process the data and instructions we provide.

Even then, that familiar phrase revealed a tendency to transfer to the machine a responsibility that remained fundamentally human.

Nor is this mechanism new. More than twenty years ago, the wars in Iraq popularized expressions such as ***"surgical strikes"*** **and** ***"collateral damage."*** Today, as artificial intelligence contributes to target identification and accelerates military decision-making, the vocabulary has changed very little.
Machines evolve. Euphemisms endure.

Since 2023, the conflicts in Gaza, Lebanon, and more recently Iran have made this reality even more visible. The more technical systems stand between a decision and its consequences, the more responsibility seems to dissolve.
And yet the essential question remains.

Who is the author of a massacre?

The algorithm that recommends a target?
The analyst who validates it?
The commander who gives the order?
The pilot who carries it out?
Or the political authority that ultimately decides?

The multiplication of intermediaries does not erase human responsibility. It merely allows each participant to claim a progressively smaller share of it.
There are no war crimes without authors.

4. When Humans Imitate Machines

But let us return to the civilian world. For unfortunately, this is where much of today's public debate is concentrated.

The old tension between the **power of rhetoric** and the **truth it conveys** also resurfaces in many reactions to AI.
Not long ago, I came across an essay by a professor and writer arguing that AI represents a form of unfair competition.

His concern struck me — not because it was entirely unfounded, but because it seemed to grant AI precisely what it does not possess: the capacity to produce thought.

Artificial intelligence therefore does not create a new philosophical problem. It revives an ancient Socratic question: **Should we judge a text by its eloquence, or by the truth it carries?**

If we come to believe that a machine is competing with us in the realm of thought itself, then perhaps the real problem is not the power of AI.

The problem is that we have ceased to inhabit our own minds — something surely more serious than no longer knowing how to read.
For if reading no longer strengthens our capacity to reason, what is its purpose?

Montaigne already preferred **a well-formed mind** to **a well-filled one**. His warning has perhaps never been more relevant. Today, our minds are no longer merely at risk of being overloaded with knowledge, but of being overwhelmed by texts generated **faster than many will ever be able to understand them.**

As AI becomes part of everyday life, opinions multiply.
For some, it has become almost a reflex.

We already see one symptom of it: instead of asking whether a text is true, insightful, or illuminating, we skim it in search of clues revealing **who — or what — wrote it.**

Yet a flawed argument does not become more valid simply because it comes from a human being.
That may be the real paradox. At the very moment we accuse AI of producing repetitive texts, **much of the human writing about AI has itself become repetitive.**

I could have entitled this essay:

The Real Problem Is Not AI Writing. It Is Human Repetition.

Or perhaps:

When Humans Write About AI Like Machines.

Or, more provocatively:

Hee-AI! Hee-AI!

Like the braying of a donkey. By endlessly repeating the same questions about AI without ever probing them more deeply, the debate sometimes begins to sound less like thought than like an echo.

Let me be clear.

I am not suggesting that we should stop writing about AI. **Quite the opposite.** But writing about a subject already saturated with commentary requires bringing something new: an angle, a distinction, an idea — something that justifies adding yet another voice to the conversation.

5. Who Is Feeding Whom?

This leads to another question: **Who has been feeding the machine?**

AI did not emerge from a vacuum. It has been trained on billions of texts, conversations, datasets, and human exchanges, largely made possible by the Internet and modern communication technologies.

In that sense, it is human intelligence **that has taught** artificial intelligence.

Perhaps what unsettles us is not merely that machines imitate us, but that the student might one day surpass the teacher. *Blade Runner*

had already captured this anxiety: the artificial being becomes a disturbing mirror, revealing less about what it is than about what its creator no longer understands about himself.
A crucial distinction must nevertheless be made: **possessing knowledge is not the same as possessing self-awareness.**

To know is not to live. And living is not merely a matter of accumulating experiences, but of being transformed by them and ultimately answering for what one becomes.

Perhaps what defines an intelligence is not simply what it knows, but what it is willing and able to answer for.
AI can process, recombine, and reproduce patterns derived from human experience. **But it does not yet possess that experience as consciousness.**

Of course, we can speculate. Science fiction has explored these questions for decades.

But perhaps that is not the most urgent debate.

There is something unsettling about being perplexed by what we ourselves have created.
Perhaps that very perplexity should invite us to greater humility.

Instead, let us strive for deeper and more constructive conversations — conversations capable of teaching us something not only about AI, **but also about ourselves:** about the human mind, about the ways we think, transmit knowledge, imitate, create, and believe.

And perhaps it will remind us that we ourselves are the product of a far greater intelligence, one that manifests itself everywhere, from the infinitely vast to the infinitely small.

Perhaps artificial intelligence is not asking us, first and foremost, what it is becoming, but what we are becoming.
And perhaps this detour ultimately brings us back to a far older question:

the intelligence at work in the real world.

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